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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

June 13, 2006

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr.
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Vice Admiral Lautenbacher:

I am concerned over reports that NOAA officials are discouraging agency scientists from making the results of their work public. *The Washington Post* has reported that officials at your agency have tried to prevent the agency's scientists from speaking publicly about their findings on the subject of global warming. A survey conducted by the Union of Concerned Scientists (NOAA Fisheries Survey Summary, June 2005) found that NOAA scientists are afraid to speak frankly about their work and feel constrained in their role as scientists. Finally, Jerry Mahlman, former director of NOAA's Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory, has stated that NOAA climate scientists have been systematically prevented from speaking freely (www.climatewatch.org).

NOAA's role is to predict environmental changes, protect life and property, provide decision makers with reliable scientific information, and foster global environmental stewardship. The agency cannot carry out those duties on the crucial subject of climate change if its scientists feel that certain findings, no matter how well supported, are disfavored by their superiors. Censorship discourages the very research we need most to create the best possible understanding of the climate.

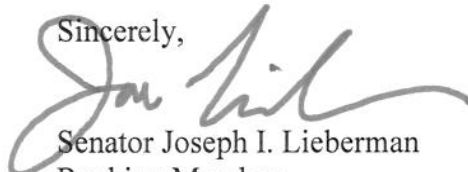
You recently acknowledged "the right and duty of scientists to seek the truth and to provide the best scientific advice possible." It is my understanding, however, that NOAA does not currently have a specific policy outlining how NOAA scientists communicate the results of their studies to the American public. In light of this, I request the following:

- 1) That you develop a detailed policy outlining mechanisms for public dissemination of scientific findings at NOAA. The policy should be designed to reverse any impression among NOAA's scientists that their superiors disfavor the dissemination of scientific findings that have implications for certain policy debates.

- 2) Determine whether NOAA officials have been operating according to any unofficial guidance on managing the public dissemination of findings reached by the agency's climate scientists, and ascertain the origin of that guidance.
- 3) If evidence of any such guidance is not discovered, investigate and determine why the conduct referenced in the first paragraph of this letter nevertheless appears to have occurred.

NOAA has a history of scientific excellence, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that our scientists remain free to pursue and communicate the scientific discoveries that have helped build our great nation. I look forward to hearing the results of your investigation, and appreciate your prompt response to this inquiry.

Sincerely,



Senator Joseph I. Lieberman
Ranking Member